THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

December/January, 2010-11 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Leaks of a Different Kind

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

Editor's Note: This article also appeared on a blog for The National Catholic Reporter.

The website WikiLeaks' release of nearly 400,000 secret US war logs on Iraq, posted amidst the din of mid-term elections, represents the largest intelligence leak in US history. The release also provides Americans with a mammoth record of a war most of us want to ignore or forget.

No "earthshaking revelations" here, claimed The New York Times in its initial summaries of the Iraq War Logs. Iraqi civilian deaths, the excesses of privatized warriors, the torture of Iraqis by Iraqi troops and police, detailed in the logs, were stories already reported.

Matt Davies

Amy Goodman, co-anchor of the progressive news program *Democracy Now*, described Wikileaks' latest offering as "a new trove of evidence of the violence and suffering that has befallen Iraqis since the US invasion of 2003."

The posting of these 391,832 "significant action reports" and memos from US military files may also signify the durability of conscience, its unpredictable emergence even in war.

"The only reason that the public is seeing [the logs] now is that some brave soldier or soldiers stepped forward to give us this material and get it out into the public domain where it can shape public policy and do some good," said Julian Assange, Wikileaks editor-in-chief during a recent interview on *Democracy Now*.

Assange's comments brought to mind past whistleblowers: Daniel Ellsberg, the former Rand analyst who leaked "the Pentagon Papers" secret documents about the Vietnam War; Ron Ridenhour, the helicopter gunner, who broke the story on the 1968 massacre at the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai, during which US troops killed between 347-500 unarmed Vietnamese, mostly women, children, and the elderly; and Joseph Darby, the Army Specialist who slipped a letter to military investigators along with two CDs of photos depicting the torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib by members of his reserve unit.

For these men, finding the courage to heed conscience took time. All three deliberated extensively before turning in damning evidence about a war they were fighting.

For Hugh Thompson Jr., a US army helicopter pilot, conscience remained intact and decisive even amidst war's carnage. Thompson and two crewmen were flying reconnaissance when they saw the strewn bodies of women and children in My Lai.

"It looks to me like there is an awful lot of unnecessary killing going on down there," the pilot radioed to his accompa-

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The Simpsons & Stephen Colbert

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

On October 16, 2010, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's newspaper, declared that the cartoon character Homer Simpson was a Catholic. In an article entitled "Aristotle's Virtues and Homer's Doughnut," the Vatican recognized that without Homer, his family, and friends, "many today wouldn't know how to laugh."

The article referenced several *Simpsons*' episodes including one in which a desperate Homer prays, "I'm not normally a religious man, but if you're up there, save me, Superman!" Another episode, entitled "The Father, Son, and Holy Guest Star," features the voice of Liam Neeson as an affable Catholic priest who gives Bart a comic book about saints which convinces Bart to become Catholic. Homer goes to confront "Father Sean" and get his son back to "The Western Branch of American Reform Presbylutheran Church," but decides to convert himself instead after discovering a pancake breakfast and bingo.

Al Jean, the executive producer of *The Simpsons* said he was in "shock and awe" over the claim that Homer was a Catholic. Father Francessco Occhetta, SJ, the author of an article in the journal *Civiltá Cattolica*, which the Vatican cited, also distanced the Simpsons from the Church. Father Occhetta said, "I wouldn't say they're Catholic, I would say they are people of faith.... The authors [of *The Simpsons*] are fiercely critical of some religious people but they respect faith, openness to God, prayer, and going every Sunday to listen to their pastor—even if they sleep or eat popcorn."

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Leaks

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nying gunships. Thompson drew his gun on the Americans and threatened to shoot anyone who killed another Vietnamese. He had his crewmen wade into the gore of shot-up bodies to retrieve children who were still alive. Thompson took them to a hospital and then returned to army headquarters. According to William Eckhardt, chief prosecutor for My Lai, the agitated pilot pounded on a table, tears rolling down his cheeks, and said, "Notice, notice, notice...."

Conscience, to loosely paraphrase Pope John Paul II, can be muted, garbled, warped, but never silenced. Perhaps it persists because "self-deception wears us down," says Michael Baxter. A professor of theology at Notre Dame and a Catholic pacifist, Baxter has counseled Iraq combat veterans and seen up close the cracks in psyche and heart caused by war. The soldiers who push the send button are "feeling free. They are kind of doing it for themselves," he said.

And for us. Messengers report the details of battle only if they believe the truth still matters to the listeners.

It is an oversimplification to compare the anonymous whistleblowers of Wikileaks to the likes of Ellsberg, Thompson Jr., or Darby, men who risked imprisonment, endured death threats, and were ostracized for telling what they saw. With the exception of US Army Private Bradley Manning, an intelligence analyst, now in solitary confinement for leaking to Wikikeaks thousands of memos and the "Collateral Murder" video of a July 2007 Apache helicopter attack in Baghdad, none of the website's contributors, so far, have faced any consequences for their actions.

But, like whistleblowers before them, the website's contributors, perhaps troubled by "a lot of unnecessary killing," hope to prompt change. "I want people to see the truth . . . because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public," Manning said.

Wikileaks' recent postings have provoked predictable castigations from the Pentagon, fierce criticism of Assange, and debates about the ethics of dumping so much classified information on the internet. The war logs' documentation of American acquiescence to Iraqi use of torture has also led to the discovery of Frago 242, a military order issued in 2004 that made it a policy to turn a blind eye. Several countries are now calling for war crimes investigations into reports that Coalition forces indulged in what one journalist described as "domestic rendition," knowingly turning over Iraqis tagged as "terrorists" to Iraqi authorities who had them tortured.

None of these revelations shock Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent for the British daily, *The Independent*, and a man who has covered more wars than any human being should. Fisk, who reported from Iraq, says the Wikileaks war logs merely confirm the Pentagon was lying when it denied journalists' reports of civilian deaths and torture.

"The fact of the matter is that routinely when armies go abroad to other countries far away, they torture and they abuse and they turn blind eyes. Look at Korea. Look at Vietnam. I could go through a whole lot more. And it will happen again. I don't think we care about the people whose lands we occupy and that is the problem," Fisk said.

To that revelation, I say: Notice, notice, notice... Ω

Editor's Note: Bradley Manning is being held in military prison in Virginia. For more info: www.couragetoresist.org. Send solidarity letters and postcards to:

Bradley Manning
c/o Courage to Resist
484 Lake Park Ave #41
Oakland CA 94610

Vol. 27, No. 3 THE Dec/Jan 2010-11

CATHOLIC RADICAL

Published by:
The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community
52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 Telephone: (508) 753-3588, 753-3089
Email:theresecw2@gmail.com

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Conscience

by Pope John Paul II

Editor's Note: The following quote is excerpted from Pope John Paul II's 1993 encyclicla letter, Veritas Splendor.

The relationship between man's freedom and God's law is most deeply lived out in the "heart" of the person, in his moral conscience. As the Second Vatican Council observed: "In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: 'do this, shun that'. For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged (cf. Rom 2:14-16)."

Sarah Young

The way in which one conceives the relationship between freedom and law is thus intimately bound up with one's understanding of the moral conscience....which the Council itself defined as "the sanctuary of man, where he is alone with God whose voice echoes within him." This voice, it is said, leads man not so much to a meticulous observance of universal norms as to a creative and responsible acceptance of the personal tasks entrusted to him by God.... Ω

The Problem Is the Pentagon

by Harry Murray

Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted from the Fall 2010 Issue of The Rochester Catholic Worker, *the publication of Saint Joseph's House of Hospitality in Rochester, New York.*

We have now experienced the second "end of major combat operations" in the Iraq War. The first was announced victoriously, albeit prematurely, by George W. Bush as he strutted aboard an aircraft carrier. Now, the "last US combat troops" have left Iraq. Will this second "end of combat" prove any less illusory than the first?

Fifty thousand troops remain in Iraq, and, according to recently-retired US Army Major General John Batiste, half of these are really combat troops "fully prepared to go to war." Military bases remain, as does the new $1.2 billion-dollar US mega-embassy. Batiste calls Iraq "another Korea" (a nation in which US troops have been garrisoned for nearly sixty years). Iraq remains unstable and killings continue unabated. As this goes on, the war in Afghanistan has escalated, with the increase in US troops leading to an increase in US casualties.

The Pentagon's budget has continued to increase even beyond Bush-era levels. [*NY Times* columnist] Nicholas Kristoff reports that President Obama has requested "6.1% more in military spending than the peak of military spending under Mr. Bush." Between 2008 and 2010, according to the Congressional Research Service, the Defense budget has climbed from 4.3% of Gross Domestic Product to 4.9% of GDP.

All of this may seem remote to those who don't have loved ones in Iraq and Afghanistan. But here at Saint Joe's, we see the impact of these policies every day—in the persons who come to our doors for food and shelter. We continue to see homeless veterans. We see the results of an unemployment rate that stays around 10%. We see the effects of inadequate healthcare provision. We see the results of a failing education system, of a city school district which saw its graduation rate drop from 52% to 46% in 2009.

We hear other shelter providers (those funded by the government) complain that the Department of Human Services has not increased their reimbursement rates for years, and that the state budget fiasco reduced them to taking out loans while waiting for state reimbursement. All levels of government are cutting essential services, but the flow of resources to the Pentagon continues to increase. In so many ways, the Pentagon feeds on the blood of the poor.

Brian Kavanagh

What has really changed under Obama? There has been some de-escalation of rhetoric. The new National Security Strategy of the United States, issued in May 2010, has avoided the argument for "preventive war" that was a prominent feature of the two National Security Strategies issued under Bush.

The document does not, however, specifically reject the "Bush Doctrine," stating that "The United States must reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend our nation and our interests, yet we will also seek to adhere to standards that govern the use of force." This language, although more measured than that of the Bush Administration, does not rule out the possibility of a "preventive strike" by the US on any perceived enemy.

Obama believes in the "just war" doctrine. His Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech was an unabashed defense of a just war doctrine. True, he did not attempt to distort and expand the idea of "just war" beyond what even the Pope could recognize, as his predecessor did. The Bush "preventive war" approach serves to unite Christian pacifists with all reasonable just war theorists in opposition to a doctrine that tried to legitimize unjust war. Obama's more traditional just war approach brings the issue for Christians back to the debate between the just war approach and nonviolence.

As I have argued previously, just war theory has no biblical basis. It was imported to Christianity from Roman thought (specifically Cicero's philosophical treatment based on the principles evoked by the Fetiales priesthood) by Ambrose and Augustine. One of the few New Testament references to war comes in James 4:1-2: "**Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is is not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask.**"

This New Testament explanation of war is relevant for our current situation: wars stem from illegitimate desires to possess resources that others have. In two verses, James lays bare the true cause of our current wars, and leads us to the conclusion that war is not compatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

By the standards of history and cost effectiveness, we are overinvested in military tools and underinvested in education, job creation, and diplomacy. If America is to foster the well-being of all its residents, it must abandon its dream of empire and global domination. You cannot serve the People and the Pentagon. Ω

Simpsons & Colbert

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I remember one episode in which Homer confiscates Bart's walkman before Church only to use it during the homily to listen to a football game. After a field goal, Homer jumps up and yells "It's good!!" Upon seeing the shocked faces in the pews around him, Homer quickly adds, "It's good for us to be here!"

Despite the irreverence, the show does struggle with morality and typically comes down firmly on the side of genuine goodness. When one of Bart's elaborate pranks hurts the feelings of his teacher, Mrs. Krabappel, Bart sees her crying and says, "I feel somehow responsible." It's not preachy, but the show does struggle toward justice. I would agree with the Vatican that parents should not be afraid to let their children watch "the adventures of the little guys in yellow."

Stephen Colbert

In the world of real people, we have the unreal character that Stephen Colbert portrays on Comedy Central making his way to Washington, DC. On September 22, Colbert, acting as a conservative news commentator, reported to the House Judiciary Committee on his experience picking beans for half a day next to undocumented immigrants. Colbert went to a New York farm in response to a United Farm Workers "Take Our Jobs Back" campaign to back up its claim that few Americans would do the work of farm laborers.

Colbert, who spoofs a right-wing commentator, said he took up the union challenge "as part of my ongoing series, 'Stephen Colbert's Fallback Positions' where I try other jobs and realize mine is way better." With mock anger, he said, "My great grandfather did not travel across four thousand miles of the Atlantic Ocean to see this country overrun by immigrants! He did it because he killed a man back in Ireland."

Colbert moved ingeniously from humor to a genuine plea for justice. He said:

I'll admit I started my workday with pre-conceived notions of migrant labor, but after working with these men and women, picking beans, packing corn, for hours on end, side by side in the unforgiving sun, I have to say, and I mean this sincerely, please don't make me do this again! It is really, really hard for one thing. When you're picking beans, you have to spend all day bending over. It turns out, and I did not know this, most soil is at ground level. If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we make the earth waist high?! Come on! Where is the funding?!

This brief experience gave me some small understanding why so few Americans are clamoring to begin an exciting career as a seasonal migrant field worker.

I'm a free market guy. Normally, I would leave this to the invisible hand of the market, but the invisible hand of the market has already moved over 84,000 acres of production and over 22,000 farm jobs to Mexico and shut down over a million acres of US farmland due to lack of available labor because even the invisible hand doesn't want to pick beans.

Now I'm not a fan of the government doing anything, but I've got to ask 'Why isn't the government doing anything?!' Maybe this jobs bill would help. I don't know. Like most members of Congress, I haven't read it. But maybe we could offer more visas to the immigrants who, let's face it, will probably be doing these jobs anyway, and this improved status might provide immigrants legal recourse if they are abused. And it just stands to reason that if your co-worker can't be exploited then you're less likely to be exploited yourself. And that might improve pay and working conditions on these farms and, eventually, Americans may consider taking these jobs again...

Colbert, a compassionate Roman Catholic offstage, dropped his television persona to conclude, "Right now migrant workers suffer and have no rights." Colbert said he was glad to use his celebrity status to draw attention to their plight because "these seem to be the least of my brothers."

In today's climate of angry talk radio

Homer Simpson

conservatism, it is important to poke through mean-spiritedness with humor like the Simpsons and Stephen Colbert. When we laugh, we take our own anger down a notch, giving us the opportunity to be more civil, to be more hopeful.

So let us pray with Homer Simpson: *Dear Lord: The gods have been good to me. For the first time in my life, everything is absolutely perfect just the way it is. So here's the deal: You freeze everything the way it is, and I won't ask for anything more. If that is OK, please give me absolutely no sign. OK, deal. In gratitude, I present you this offering of cookies and milk. If you want me to eat them for you, give me no sign. Thy will be done.*Ω

The Reality of Wealth Distribution

by Bruce Watson

Editor's Note: The following article appeared in Daily Finance *on 10/24/10.*

Americans love competition. From media heroes to sports teams, fictional characters to starving artists, the nation's cultural mythology teems with tales of desperate struggles and victorious underdogs. What's more, Americans like to reward their scrappy heroes with fame, wealth, and all the trappings of success.

This was borne out by an academic study in which the majority of respondents advocated an unequal division of national wealth, with more cash going to the rich and upper middle class and less going to the poor and working class in an ideal state. These findings aren't surprising: unequal distribution spurs competition, and great rewards spur great achievement. What is shocking, however, is the degree of inequality that most respondents preferred: 92% of respondents expressed a desire to replace America's wealth distribution system with one much closer to Sweden's.

Robert Green

Sweden has long been vilified by pundits who are concerned about government intervention in the market and "socialist" programs to redistribute wealth. Surprisingly, however, the notoriously left-leaning country is also home to a very popular model for wealth distribution.

In 2005, Harvard University's Michael Norton and Duke University's Dan Ariely polled a cross-section of 5,522 citizens about their preferences for wealth division. Their results, which they recently published in "Building a Better America - One Wealth Quintile at a Time," demonstrate that most Americans have a severely skewed vision of America's wealth distribution, and a surprisingly radical outlook on where the country's money should actually go.

For their study, Norton and Ariely divided America into five groups, which could be described as the rich, the upper middle class, the middle class, the lower class, and the poor. Currently, 85% of America's wealth, which is defined as total assets minus total liabilities, is held by the country's richest 20%. Meanwhile the upper middle class holds 11%, the middle class has 4%, and the lower class and poor share an anemic 0.3%. In terms of actual money, this translates into average non-income holdings of $2.3 million per rich person, $291,000 per upper class person, $106,000 per middle class person, and $22,000 per lower class or poor person.

Of course, wealth is different from income, but the divisions are significant there, as well. The rich enjoy a median income of $259,700 per year, compared to $74,700 for the upper middle, $46,700 for the middle, and $20,200 for the lower class and poor.

In the poll, the vast majority of Americans across the political, gender, and wealth spectrum displayed a markedly skewed understanding of how America's money is divided. On average, respondents thought that the rich hold only 58% of the nation's wealth, 27% less than their actual holdings. They thought that the middle class controls 13% of the country's wealth, more than three times their actual holdings. As for the bottom 40% of the population, the assumption was that the lower class and poor own a measly 9% of the country's wealth. In reality, these two groups control about one thirtieth of that amount.

Although the perception that America's wealth distribution is unfair cut across partisan lines, Republicans and Democrats disagreed about the ideal distribution. People who voted for George Bush believed that the richest 20% of the population deserved roughly 35% of the nation's wealth. Kerry voters radically disagreed: they felt that the rich deserved only about 30%. When it came to the country's poorest citizens, Bush voters felt that they deserved about 9% of the country's assets; Kerry voters preferred to give them 12%.

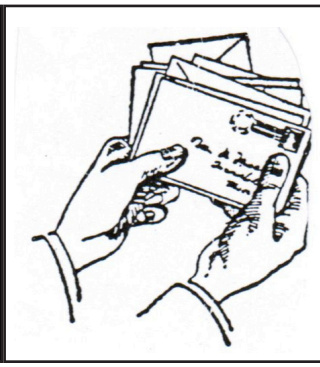
Respondents making over $100,000 per year, the group most heavily skewed toward a top-heavy distribution of wealth, advocated a system in which the top 20% received about 40% of the country's assets and the bottom 20% got roughly 7%. Yet even this comparatively Dickensian wealth distribution still gave America's rich less than half of their current holdings, while giving the poorest more than twenty times their current holdings.

There is a wide range of explanations for why Americans don't push for a more equitable distribution of wealth, but none of them are conclusive. What is clear, however, is that the country is moving in the wrong direction: since 1983, America's richest 20% have seen their share of the pie increase by about 4%, while the rest of the country has gotten ever-smaller slivers. The middle class, for example, has lost over 23% of its relative share of wealth, and the poorest 40% of the population has seen its tiny share slashed by a brutal 78%. What's more, with the potential continuation of Bush tax cuts, inheritance tax cuts, and a shockingly low capital gains tax, it looks like those numbers are going to get even worse.Ω

...In 1973, the average US CEO was paid $27 for every dollar paid to a typical worker; by 2007 that ratio had grown to $275 to $1.... The US has the greatest inequality between rich and poor among all Western industrialized nations.... The World Factbook, published by the CIA, includes an international ranking of the inequality inside each country.... The US ranking of 45 in 2007 is...nine places lower than India....

Bill Quigley
Common Dreams, 10/25/10

Letters



Dear Claire and Scott,
Thank you for sending *The Catholic Radical*. It always edifies me and motivates me to try to do my part in serving the poor....

I felt great pain when I read Fr. Roy Bourgeois's explanation for why he supports the ordination of women and more pain as I read your note to his letter. I have always felt much pain when I read of so much injustice and violence in every issue of the C.R. But to know that you believe that the refusal of the Popes and the Church to ordain women is an injustice you must denounce, is just one more of the sorrows I always find in your pages.

Does your support for women's ordination mean that you think the Popes are unjust, or that you are more just? Could it be that the Holy Spirit has told you something, that the Spirit has not revealed to past Popes? And still not yet to Pope Benedict?

I love you for so faithfully denouncing injustice. But I'm sad to know the Vatican, or the hierarchy, or Pope John Paul, are on your list. He declared that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women. Still you discern at least a little wiggle room. I'm still immensely grateful to you, but now with one exception.

The Spirit be with you and with the Pope and the Vatican and the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance.

Father John Wallace
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Editor's Note: Our dear friend Father Wallace raises the very serious concern for anyone taking a position contrary to accepted teaching, the danger of self-righteousness. As Catholic Workers, we follow Dorothy Day's and Peter Maurin's practice of respect for the hierarchy tempered by devotion to the Scripture, saints, and the movement of the Holy Spirit in our own consciences.

During World War I, the American hierarchy campaigned for the war and opposed Catholic conscientious objection. During the Spanish Civil War, the hierarchy stood behind the fascist dictator Francisco Franco. Dorothy and Peter opposed both of these positions.

During World War II, Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian peasant, had a dream that joining the German army was like boarding a train bound for hell. His parish priest and bishop told him he was wrong and that he should serve in the military like other Catholics did. They chided him for thinking he was wiser than them, but Jägerstätter, without pride, knew in his heart and head that Nazism was evil. He followed his conscience to his death and was declared a blessed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009.

On the question of women's ordination, Pope John Paul II announced that the Church does not have the authority to ordain women because Jesus chose only male apostles. Then again, Christ only chose observant Jews as well, and, at the First Council of Jerusalem, Saint Paul convinced the early Church to abandon this restriction so as to welcome Gentiles.

Liturgical change has always been within the Church's power. For centuries women were prohibited from walking in a church sanctuary because menstruation was considered unclean. Women had to cover their heads at Mass because St. Paul called for it. They could not read the Psalms or Epistles at Mass, nor could they distribute the Eucharist. All of this has changed. But despite this progress women are still excluded from proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, celebrating the Sacraments, and leading the Church. Those restrictions, against half of God's creation, appear to us as unjust, and so we are bound by conscience to work for their end.

Dear Scott,
Thanks for the enlightening articles. I shared them with others.

Living in a somewhat poor area, I think the war on poverty has shifted to the war on the poor.

Robert Curnow
Saint Petersburg, Florida

Editor's Note: After receiving a letter from one of our incarcerated readers in California who mentioned a need for stationary and stamps, we sent a small money order to the inmate. He sent us the following reply. We print it here anonymously to respect his privacy and to protect him from reprisals from prison officials.

Dear Scott and Claire,
Thanks for your $20 donation, charity to my poverty. But I won't get anything from it. At another time, when another party did the same, I got zero. My family sent me $100. I still got nothing.

This is because the prison automatically takes away 55% of all money that comes into the prison and deducts the rest of it for legal mail, postage, court fees, doctor fees, medication charges, damaged jail property charges.... The court charges restitution fines against my prison account, even though I claim to be innocent of the crime.

I can get only 20 stamps a week and four packages a year from a specifically assigned vendor.

I hope you can relate this message to others. Don't send money to prisoners in America... America is holding lots of innocent people in prison just for the profit. Once you are in, the prison industry will do anything to make you stay, including setting up the newcomer and adding more charges.

Thank you! God bless you all.

Chad Hyatt

What's the Big Deal about Jewish Settlements?

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In 1967, Israel seized the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. In 1968, the first Jewish-only settlement was established in the West Bank city of Hebron. The International Court of Justice, the Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations, the European Union, Canada, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have declared that the settlements are a violation of international law.

All recent US presidents have opposed Jewish settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories:

• On April 12, 1980, President Jimmy Carter said, "Our position on the settlements is very clear. We do not think they are legal, and they are obviously an impediment to peace." *61,500 settlers*.

• On September 1, 1982, President Ronald Reagan said, "The immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel, more than any other action, could create the confidence needed for wider participation in these talks. Further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel." *106,595 settlers*.

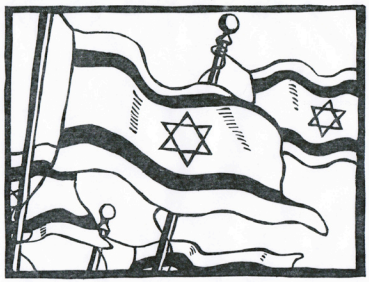
• On March 3, 1990, President George H. W. Bush said, "My position is that the foreign policy of the United States says we do not believe there should be new settlements in the West Bank or in East Jerusalem. And I will conduct that policy as if it's firm, which it is." *227,500 settlers*.

• On January 7, 2001, President Bill Clinton said, "the settlement enterprise and building bypass roads in the heart of what will one day be part of a Palestinian state is inconsistent with the Oslo commitment that both sides negotiated." *387,859 settlers*.

• On April 4, 2002, President George W. Bush said, "Israeli settlement activity in occupied territory must stop, and the occupation must end...." *414,119 settlers*.

• On May 18, 2009, President Barak Obama said, "Settlements have to be stopped for us to move forward." *479,500 settlers*.

On May 28, 2009, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "With respect to settlements, the President was very clear when [Israeli] Prime Minister Netanyahu was here. He wants to see a stop to settlements, not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions."



Lars and Lois Hokanson

In December 2009, the Israelis agreed to a 10-month freeze on new settlement construction in the West Bank, while settlement building continued in East Jerusalem. This small concession was enough to persuade the Palestinian president to begin face-to-face negotiations. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Netanyahu refused to renew even this partial freeze causing the talks to collapse.

In a last ditch effort to convince Israel to extend the settlement slow-down for six more months, President Obama offered guarantees that the US would veto any anti- Israeli resolutions in the UN, not impose an accord on Israel, or force a full withdrawal from the occupied West Bank and West Jerusalem. He also promised major increases in military aid. And yet, on October 1, 2010, settlement construction not only resumed, but it did so at a faster rate than ever before.

Considering the fact that Israel already receives more US aid than any other country, more than the entire Third World, the Israeli disregard for the wishes of every American President, Republican and Democrat, since 1980, is astounding. It brings to mind *The Wall Street Journal* reporter, Raymond Bonner's, description of the attitude towards the US expressed by the Salvadoran military junta in 1981: "Give us millions of dollars and go to hell."

In the face of the US government's emasculation by Israel, the grass roots Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions Movement (bdsmovement.net) gains stature. All our readers are encouraged to research it and join its efforts to persuade Israel to respect human rights and end its occupation. Ω

Catholic Worker Calendar

December 1 & January 10, 24 —Mass: Join us in prayer and song at 7:30 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

Ade Bethune

December 8—Fair Trade Christmas Gifts: Please come by and pick up some coffee, tea, cocoa, nuts, or fruit from Equal Exchange. Nice gifts that benefit farmers directly. 7-8:30 P.M. at 52 Mason Street. Refreshments will be served.

December 16 & January 20—Ta'anit Tzedek: Jewish Fast for Gaza Prayer Vigil: Please join us in a Jewish prayer and fast for an end to the Israeli siege on Gaza. Noon-1 P.M. In front of Clark University on Main Street in Worcester.

December 19 —Christmas Caroling: Join us for festive song and celebration. Gather at 52 Mason Street at 5:30 P.M. Hot cider and cookies to follow.

December 3 & January 7 —Vigil Against War & Abortion: Join us for a vigil starting at the military recruiting station on Park Avenue and ending across from Planned Parenthood on Pleasant Street in Worcester. Noon to 1 P.M.

For more information, please call: 508 753-3588
or email theresecw2@gmail.com

Mason Street Musings

On Halloween, one of our guests came home drunk. Claire and I told him that we'd be happy to drive him to detox for the night and that, so long as he was sober, he could return to Mason Street the next day. After some back and forth, he agreed to go, and it was decided that I'd take him, since my costume was a bit more serious than Claire's. She was wearing an outfit, sent by her sister in Virginia, and I was wearing one from our attic. Claire was a "biker girl" and I was Saint Francis of Assisi. At the Community Healthlink building, our guest and I were admitted by a skeptical night watchman. He looked me over and softened, "You're more than welcome to come in, friar." I wonder what he would have said to Claire.

A few days earlier, our 25-year-old son, Justin, came to dinner and told us that he had gone to a grocery store near his apartment to buy deodorant and a pomegranate. He pointedly refused a paper or plastic bag. On his way out, he met a frail, young mother begging for money to buy foodfor herself and her daughter. Justin refused to give her money, but offered to go with her into the store and use his debit card for food. He put down his fruit and deodorant against an outside wall, grabbed a shopping cart, and went back inside with the woman. She timidly selected a few items asking each time, "Is this okay?" to which Justin replied, "Sure, anything you want."

Afterwards, he helped her carry the purchases to her apartment where empty shelves verified her need for food.

As he was about to leave, she asked if he would go with her to another grocery store where she claimed the prices are cheaper. He agreed. At this store, she bought over $100 worth of food, of which she could only carry a small fraction. Justin said his arms were aching and he had to stop frequently to rest. He concluded his story by telling how he went back to the original grocery store to retrieve his deodorant and pomegranate. Lo and behold, they were right where he left them.

Fritz Eichenberg (detail)

Our children often argue with us about politics, philosophy, and religion, not to mention movies, history, and art. Sometimes Claire and I wonder if any of our ideals will rub off, but, a story like Justin's puts us at ease.

Especially now in this holiday-packed season, when people give out candy to children, gather with family to give thanks, and then share gifts around a Christmas tree, we can see that personal acts of kindness, like Justin's, are what makes life meaningful.

Our guest, Joel, showed me an ornate plaque of the Ten Commandments, which he found on a sidewalk. Obeying those laws would reduce the level or violence and greed in the world, but wouldn't, by themselves, make us any more loving. The law-abiding Pharisees couldn't comprehend why Jesus would heal someone on the Sabbath, or converse with a woman or a Samaritan.

The dicey business of reaching out to others in face-to-face situations often defies convention and takes us into an uncertain place. I like to think that Jesus took a similar leap of faith when He decided to come down to earth and be born an oppressed and impoverished Jew. He realized we needed more than another tablet with rules. We needed His company.

I pray that all of us will go the extra mile with those in need. Fear tells us that this will ruin our day or even risk our lives, but Justin still enjoyed his pomegranate and deodorant. And our drunken guest returned sober the next day with news that he had gotten a job.

God will not leave our side. A very blessed Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to you all! Ω **Scott**

SS. Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker
52 Mason Street
Worcester, MA 01610
(508) 753-3588 & (508) 753-3089

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